



**REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
NATIONAL NUCLEAR COMMISSION
PO BOX 2
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960**

ETHICS PROTOCOL FOR RESEARCHERS AND STUDY ABROAD INSTRUCTORS

Thank you for your interest in building knowledge related to the impacts of U.S. Government nuclear weapons testing and its long-term impacts on the land and people of the Marshall Islands. The National Nuclear Commission (NNC) of the Republic of the Marshall Islands acknowledges with gratitude the long history and importance of knowledge-generation, and the NNC would like research to continue. Indeed, the Marshall Islands needs for research to continue as there are many areas where that we do not understand. If of interest, the NNC can support potential researchers with the design of questions and projects that can best support the interests and capacity-building of the Marshall Islands. The protocols discussed below are in no way designed to discourage research about the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands; quite the opposite as the NNC developed these protocols to create stronger partnerships and linkages between researchers and the Marshallese people so we can work constructively, and in collaboration. We invite prospective researchers to attend March 1 events each year as an opportunity to learn about the nuclear issues that are most pressing to communities and the RMI national government, to meet community members, and to brainstorm potential research projects that can build on the strengths of researchers and Marshallese communities.

Researchers and journalists often publish their narratives about the Marshall Islands to advance their own careers. The viewpoints of researchers and instructors impact public perspectives about the Marshall Islands. It is the Marshallese people, not visitors, who live with the consequences of circulated narratives. In no way does the NNC want to influence the findings of independent research; please be mindful, however, that one-dimensional portrayals of the Marshallese people as victims harms efforts to bolster resilience and self-reliance. Please consider the role that you can play in bringing forward positive narratives that amplify the strengths of the Marshallese people. The NNC would be pleased to suggest any resources regarding ethical research practices, including: <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/32892>.

Section I: Pre-departure written submissions to the NNC

Please submit to the NNC to written documents: 1. Approval for your activities, in writing, from local governments, communities or institutions in the Marshall Islands, and 2. An ethics review, on letterhead, to the eight areas defined below in “Ethics Review: Written Submissions #2.”

Local permission: Written Submission #1. Prior to any site visits, data gathering, filming, or photography, please provide to the NNC copies of permissions granted by the local governments or appropriate entities in the RMI. (The NNC can assist with securing these permissions ahead of time, but will not serve as an intermediary as it is essential for researchers to develop relationships directly with atoll representatives). Your agreements with local entities must communicate your plans for data transfer, storage and privacy; this includes physical or biological specimens, material culture, images, recordings, and cultural practices. These protections extend to study abroad programs as well. Please be mindful that requests from local entities may take time given different levels of infrastructure in the Marshall Islands, including computer and telephone access on the remote islands. Visitors to the Marshall Islands should plan many months in advance to secure permission.

Ethics Review: Written Submission #2. To meet expectations for ethical engagement with communities in the Marshall Islands, including the full participation of community members during every phase of your inquiry, submit to the RMI National Nuclear Commission written demonstration that you have integrated the following principles into your proposal:

1. No further harm. The Marshallese people and land have been harmed greatly by research. It is imperative to consider this before undertaking your work given the history of violent and exploitative knowledge extraction that predates your arrival and activities. Your work must acknowledge previous harms as well as ensure no further physical, psychological, political, or economic harm to the Marshallese. Please explain how your inquiry will protect from further harms.
2. Previous research has not benefited the Marshallese people. The Marshallese people and land is often violently exploited by outsiders who use the Marshall Islands to advance their own interests, careers, learning, or power. The exploitive and extractive activities reached an apex during the testing program, but these practices are not limited to the past, nor only to U.S. Government researchers. Please explain how your inquiry will benefit the Marshallese people.
3. Expectations and respect. The NNC encourages you to familiarize yourself with Marshallese custom, including learning some phrases in the Marshallese language, so you can model for others, including outsiders who will visit the islands after you, the importance of respectful engagement with the people and place. Please do not expect that people should share their stories, images, lives or experiences with you just because you are interested. Nuclear issues in the Marshall Islands are extremely sensitive, personal, and in many cases painful. Working with our elders requires the

utmost respect, including respect for their exhaustion in talking to outsiders without seeing any demonstrated benefits to their communities. Please explain your plans for thoughtful engagement of the people, and in particular the elders.

4. Supporting research is a burden. Knowledge production – through research, teaching (e.g. study abroad), and media representations -- is not benign, and often serves the interests and priorities of those seeking the knowledge rather than the Marshallese people. Even well-intentioned research or knowledge production is invasive and creates hardships for communities. Please describe the previously recorded or existing research you have accessed in preparation for your research and provide a justification for your inquiry.
5. Capacity building. If you are coming to the Marshall Islands to undertake investigations that will advance your own career, education, or interests, you should ensure that your activities build the capacity of the Marshallese people to conduct similar inquiries and to better understand the topics of your exploration. Whenever possible, your research should employ and build the skills of the Marshallese people, including the mentoring of our young people to explore university-based research.

It is the expectation of the NNC that any research includes paid positions for community members to serve as on-going liaisons, translators, and cultural guides whether you are researching in the Marshall Islands for the first time or have long-term relationships with communities. If you applied for and received funding for research in the Marshall Islands that does not include funding to hire local collaborators, then please obtain additional funding to provide paid positions for local Marshallese. This requirement is in response to economic inequalities between researchers and their institutions and local communities in the RMI. Local collaborators can also guide researchers through cultural protocols, permissions, and serve as interpreters. Please describe your plans for capacity building and hiring local community members to support your projects.

6. Data transfer. It is NNC's understanding that any physical specimens or interviews collected during research belong to landowners and community members where you propose to conduct research. It is the expectation that raw data collected in the RMI will be shared with communities, not just the final interpretations of data analysis in the form of a publication. For the communities where you work, it is important to provide not just a copy of your final research, but a summary of your thoughts and findings in layperson terms, translated into Marshallese. Please describe your plans for data transfer, including translation.
7. Informed consent and permissions. Prior to data collection, researchers must obtain appropriate informed consent from community members in the Marshallese language which explains the purpose of the research, and how data collected in the RMI will be used by the data collection. Oral permission may be appropriate in some cases, but it

must be recorded and documented. Researchers conducting interviews must always give permission for informants to use pseudonyms to protect privacy. If you are affiliated with an academic institution, provide the NNC with a copy of your Institutional Review Board approval. If you are leading a study abroad, provide a copy of your approved study abroad proposal to your institution, and syllabus. If you are a U.S. Government worker, provide copies of any authorization for research, including Congressional mandates. Also, please provide a copy of your consent procedures for use with Marshallese informants for your inquiry.

8. Suggested donations. Supporting researchers takes time, resources, and energy away from other vital tasks. Researchers should consider making donations to non-profit agencies that provide support inquiry.

Section II: Pre-departure conversation with an NNC Commissioner

After submitting your written responses to Section I to the NNC, please arrange a telephone or in-person meeting with one of the three Commissioners for the National Nuclear Commission to discuss the sensitive aspects noted above and how they relate to your activities in the Marshall Islands. The purpose of this step is to explore the ways that your inquiry fits into other activities and undertakings related to the nuclear legacy.

After satisfactory submission of the two written requirements as well as your conversation with an NNC Commissioner, the NNC will provide you with signed acknowledgement of the approval for your research or teaching related to nuclear issues in the Marshall Islands. The NNC verification will accompany your approval from local entities in the RMI and will be kept on file in the NNC office. You must provide a copy of your research approval to the RMI Customs official at the airport upon arrival as this demonstrates transparency as a fundamental component of community engagement.

Section III: Data transfer

Upon return to your home institution, please provide to relevant local governments and non-governmental organizations, and the NNC any publications or materials based on your research or teaching related to the nuclear legacy, including media productions. This transfer of data should include your layperson summary and translation into Marshallese (the NNC can provide the names of excellent translators to hire). Students in study abroad programs should demonstrate consideration of ethics into final projects submitted to their instructors, even if they are not published.

The final products submitted to the NNC will be kept on file as evidence of commitment to undertake ethical research in the RMI, including the return of data, and will be considered for any future requests for research visits.

Contact information for the RMI National Nuclear Commission:

Ms. Rhea Moss-Christian, NNC Chair: rhea.mosschristian@rminuclearcommission.net

Mr. Alson Kelen, NNC Commissioner: alson.kelen@rminuclearcommission.net

Dr. Holly Barker, NNC Commissioner: holly.barker@rminuclearcommission.net

Ms. Keyoka Kabua, NNC Secretary: secretary@rminuclearcommission.net

Research Permission

Date: _____

To: RMI National Nuclear Commission

From: _____ (local government or RMI organization)

The leadership of either our local government or organization acknowledges that _____ received approval to undertake research or study abroad activities according to our local requirements.

Signature

Date:

Print Name

Date _____

To: RMI Customs

From: RMI National Nuclear Commission

The undersigned NNC Commissioner verifies that the proposed research by _____ was approved by local governments with full consent and transparency, and demonstrates the integration of research ethics, including full community participation, into every phase of the proposed research.

Signature

Date: